

Course Syllabus
Psychology 4040 Section 1
Psychology of Religion

Spring 2022

Wed 4:15, Taylor 314

Semester Units: 4

Instructor: *G. Michael Leffel, PhD, Professor of Psychology*

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND DESIGN

This course is a survey of some of the “hot topics” and “great debates” in the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality (Division 36, American Psychological Association). Second, the course focuses on a sub-field within the psychology of religion known as the *psychology of spiritual transformation*.

The purpose of each class session is to highlight selected topics from the required readings and to supplement this material with related ideas. *Students are responsible for all assigned readings, whether or not discussed in class.* A “graduate style” discussion format will be used in the course. *Each student is expected to have read the assigned reading for class discussion (Reading Schedule below), and be prepared to think together about the reading in class.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

A. Weekly Attendance (approx. 50 points)

Class attendance each week is 3 pts. Please see Attendance Policy below.

B. Weekly Reading Reflections (approx. 100 points)

For most weeks you will read two (2) articles that we will be discussing in class. You will complete a Reading Reflection for one (1) of these articles each week. See the Reading Schedule for which article you asked to write about. Each Reflection is graded 0-7 on completeness and thoughtfulness of your response. *This is a substantial portion of your grade.* Bring your Reading Reflection to class; please DO NOT email.

C. Essay Mid-term Exam (100 points)

Discussed in class.

D. Essay Final Exam (60 points)

Discussed in class.

2.

Attendance Policy and Contribution to Grade

Please come to class. When you are not present, the class dynamic changes. Inconsistent class attendance/tardiness impacts your final grade in the following way:

1. In a once-a-week course, following **ONE (1) unexcused** absence, *beginning with the second unexcused absence*, five (5) points will be deducted from your Final Total for each absence. In this class this deduction usually impacts your final grade.
2. In addition: "Whenever the number of accumulated absences in a class, **for any cause**, exceeds 10% percent of classes (equivalent to one and one-half weeks in a 15-week semester course), the faculty member sends a written report to the Associate Provost for Academic Administration which may result in de-enrollment" (Catalog, p. 37). In this course, *that would be after two (2) absences in this class.*

PLNU Attendance Policy and Reporting

What is an "Unexcused" Absence?

1. "There are no allowed or excused absences except when absences are necessitated by certain University-sponsored activities and are approved in writing by the Provost" (Catalog).
2. In addition, the Professor will excuse (legitimate) illness only with MD note. No exceptions please.
3. Medical (check-ups) and Dental appointments ARE NOT excused absences.

OFFICE HOURS

To schedule an appointment with me: Either (i) arrange a time with me after class, or (ii) write me a note with your available times and telephone number.

Making an appointment will assure that you have the uninterrupted amount of time you wish to speak with me. Please call me or ask me in class.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

“All students are expected to meet the standards for this course as set by the instructor. However, students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss options with the Academic Support Center (ASC) during the first two weeks of class. The ASC will contact professors with suggestions related to classroom needs and accommodations. Approved documentation must be on file in the ASC prior to the start of the semester.”

PLNU Mission
To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

STATE AUTHORIZATION

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

In order to be successful in the online environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers compatible with their computer available to use. If a student is in need of technological resources please contact student-tech-request@pointloma.edu.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

COURSE CREDIT HOUR INFORMATION

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 4 unit class delivered over 16 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 150 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided in the Canvas modules.

4.

PSY 4040

Course-at-a-Glance

“Hot Topics” and “Great Debates” in the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

Part 1

Spirituality for “Goodness” Sake

What ‘On Earth’ is Religion For?

Major Themes to Develop: How (and why) religion may be good for you; the difference between religion and spirituality; multiple meanings of spirituality; the relationship between moral goodness and spirituality; moral “intuitions” and moral emotions as a natural foundation for religion/spirituality.

Part 2

Downward “Ascent”

Discovering a Forgotten “Way” of Spiritual Transformation

Major Themes: How spiritual theology can help the psychology of spiritual transformation; rethinking the problem, purpose, and process of spiritual transformation; the concept of developmental spirituality; the “dark night of the soul”; three processes of spiritual transformation in the “moral likeness” model.

Part 3

The “Silver Key”

Selfishness and Transforming Spirituality

Major Themes: Why the psychology of spiritual transformation needs a psychology of vice; how vices relate to the *summum bonum* of love; the “classic” seven principal vices; pride (implicit narcissism) as the central human condition; Horney’s psychological model of pride.

Part 4

Crafted 4 Care

“Ancient” Spirituality Meets 21st Century Virtue Science

Major Themes: The capacity to care as central *telos* of spiritual maturity; why the psychology of spiritual transformation needs a virtue approach; what is a virtue; a new model of virtuous caring for spiritual transformation.

5.

PSY 4040 Psychology of Religion and Spirituality *Discussion and Reading Schedule*

Week 1 (Jan 12)

(Online) Welcome and Instructions for Course

Part 1

***Spirituality for “Goodness” Sake* What ‘On Earth’ is Religion For?**

Themes to Develop: How (and why) religion may be good for you; the difference between religion and spirituality; multiple meanings of spirituality; the relationship between spirituality and moral goodness; moral intuitions and moral emotions as a “natural” basis for religion/spirituality.

Week 2 (Jan 19)

What “Good” is Religion?

Reading Note: Please read EACH reading in preparation for class discussion. You will write a Reading Reflection for one (1) of the weekly readings, as assigned below. Bring your assigned Reading Reflection to class ***on the day we discuss it in class*** (for full credit).

Introduction: A Parable for Our Time

Overview of the Course

2.1 Religion and the “Flourishing” Life

Surprising Findings and Unresolved Questions

Reader: Myers, *Religion and Human Flourishing*

(A-F Write a Reading Reflection)

2.2 The Difference Between Religiosity and Spirituality

Why the Distinction May Matter

Reader: Vaillant, *The Difference Between Religion and Spirituality*

(G-W Write a Reading Reflection)

6.

Week 3 (Jan 26)

What Do You Mean by “Spirituality”?

Introduction: The New Great Debate about “Ultimate Concerns”

(Class Notes)

3.1 Multiple Meanings of “Spirituality”

A Guide for the Perplexed

(Class Notes)

3.2 “The Hero’s Adventure”

Ancient, New Story of Spiritual Transformation

Reader: Moyers, *The Hero’s Adventure*

(All Read and Write)

Week 4 (Feb 2)

The Relationship of Morality to Spirituality and Religion

Introduction: But, Does Religion Really Make Us “Good”?

(Class Notes)

4.1 The Heart of “Mature” Spirituality

The “Triangle of Ultimate Concerns” and Morality

Reader: Symington, *Emotion and Spirit*

(Read, but don’t Write)

4.2 The Moral Core of “Mature” Religion

The “Natural” Moral Foundation of Religious Spirituality

Reader: Armstrong, *Wish for a Better World*

(All Read and Write)

Week 5 (Feb 9)

“Deep Architecture” of Spirituality

Introduction: Is Spirituality “Natural” to Human Beings?

(Class Notes)

5.1 “Beyond Belief”

The (Possible) Natural Origins of Religious Moral Codes

Reader: Graham & Haidt, *Beyond Beliefs*

(A-F Write a Reading Reflection)

5.2 “Spiritual Evolution”

Moral Emotions that Connect Us to God and Others

Reader: Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*, Ch. 1, Positive Emotions

(G-W Write a Reading Reflection)

Mid-Term Essay Exam Questions Distributed in class

7.

Part 2

Downward “Ascent”

Discovering a Forgotten “Way” of Spiritual Transformation

Themes to Develop: How spiritual theology can help the psychology of spiritual transformation; rethinking the problem, purpose, and process of spiritual transformation; the concept of *developmental spirituality*; the *dark night of the soul*; three “dark night” processes of spiritual transformation.

Week 6 (Feb 16)

Christian Spirituality: What Do You Really Mean?

Introduction: Spiritual Theology and Contrasting Models of Divine-human Interaction

(Class Notes)

6.1 How Does God Change Lives?

Contrasting Visions of Divine-human Interaction

Reader: Crabb, *Inside Out*, pp. 43-53

(All Read and Write)

6.2 What Are We Practicing, and Why?

The Ends-Means “Mismatch” in Christian Practices

Reader: Bennett, *Practices of Love*, Preface

(Read, but don’t Write)

Week 7 (Feb 23)

“Dark Night of the Soul” (Part 1)

Introduction: Overview of a “Lost” Psychology of Spirituality

(Class Notes)

7.1 Overview of the Dark Night

The "Purpose" of the Night

Reader: Coe, *Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 293-296 (to Purgation)

(A-F Write a Reading Reflection)

7.2 The Liberation of Love

The Quest of "Likeness in Love"

Reader: May, *Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 58-74

(G-W Write a Reading Reflection)

8.

Week 8 (Mar 2)

"Dark Night" (Part 2)

Introduction: Love and the Dilemma of Vice

(Class Notes)

8.1 When Darkness is Light

The "Problem" of the Dark Night

Reader: Coe, *Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 296-302

(All Read and Write)

8.2 Introduction to the "Glittering Vices"

Why Virtues and Vices Are Still Important

Reader: DeYoung, *Glittering Vices*, Introduction

(Read, but don't Write)

Happy Spring Break (March 9)

(Reminder) Mid-Term Exam Due Next Wed: Bring Hard Copy to class

Week 10 (Mar 16)

"Dark Night" (Part 3)

Introduction: Vice and the "Subtractive Action" of Transformative Healing

(Class Notes)

10. 1 Why "Less is More"

The "Process" of the Dark Night

Reader: Coe, *Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 302-307
(All Read and Write)

10.2 Walking in the Dark

Practical Tips for Everyday Life
(Class Notes)

Mid-Term Exam Due: Bring Hard Copy to class

9.

Part 3

The "Silver Key"

Selfishness and Transforming Spirituality

Themes to Develop: Why the psychology of spiritual transformation needs a psychology of vice; how vices relate to the *summum bonum* of love; love and the "classic" seven principal vices; pride (implicit narcissism) as the central human condition; three processes of spiritual transformation in the moral likeness model.

Week 11 (Mar 23)

Selfishness and the Problem of "Pride"

Introduction: "Ascent" on Dante's Mount Purgatory

(Class Notes)

11.1 "Glittering Vices"

Pride and the "Tree of Vice"

(Class Notes)

11.2 Pride or Self-Contempt?

Framing the Great Debate

Reader: Cooper, Introduction AND Ch. 6, pp. 112-126 (only)

(All Read and Write)

Week 12 (Mar 30)

How is Pride the "Root" of the Vices?

Introduction: Rediscovering the Psychology of Vice
(Class Notes)

12.1 Vainglory: “Image is Everything”

The Confusion of Pride and “Arrogance”

Reader: DeYoung, *Glittering Vices*, Ch. 3 (Vainglory)

(Read, but don’t Write)

12.2 Karen Horney on the “Pride System” of Personality

Three Faces of the “Idealized Self”

Reader: Cooper, Ch. 6, pp. 126 – 134

(All Read and Write)

Week 13 (Apr 6)

The Tragic “Search for Glory”

Horney’s Conception of the “Despised Self” and Self-hate

Reader: Cooper, Ch. 6, pp. 134-remainder of chapter

(All Read and Write)

Final Exam Questions Distributed in Class

Happy Easter Recess (Apr 13)

10.

Part 4

Crafted 4 Care

“Ancient” Spirituality Meets 21st Century Virtue Science

Themes to Develop: The capacity to care as central goal of spiritual maturity; why spiritual transformation needs a virtue approach; how virtues motivate us to be good (care); which virtues and why.

Week 14 (Apr 20)

“Train Your Mind to Sculpt Your Brain to Change Your Heart”

Introduction: Virtues, the Capacity to Care, and the Practice of Mindfulness

(Class Notes)

14.1 Science Looks at Spirituality

How Reflective Awareness Practices Can “Weaken” Vices and “Strengthen” Virtues

Reader: Kristeller & Johnson, *Science Looks at Spirituality*

(A-F Write a Reading Reflection)

14.2 The Mindful “Way” of Transformation

What is Mindfulness, and Why is it Important?

Reader: D. Siegel

(G-W Write a Reading Reflection)

Week 15 (Apr 27)

Which Virtues, and Why?

Introduction: Why Virtues Are More Important Than We Have Believed

(Class Notes)

15.1 What is a Virtue?

The New “Neurodynamic” Model

(Class Notes)

15.2 Who Cares?

A Model of Virtuous Caring for Spiritual Transformation

(Class Notes)

Week 16

Bring Final Exam to Class

Week 2 (Jan 19)

What “Good” is Religion?

Reading Note: Please read EACH reading in preparation for class discussion. You will write a Reading Reflection for one (1) of the weekly readings, as assigned below. Bring your assigned Reading Reflection to class ***on the day we discuss it in class*** (for full credit).

Introduction: A New Direction for the Psychology of Spiritual Transformation

Read before Class: *Brief Report #1* (in your packet)

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Week 3 (Jan 26)

What Do You Mean by "Spirituality"?

Introduction: The New Great Debate about "Ultimate Concerns"

Read before Class: *Brief Report #2*

3.1 The Swimming Pool and Quest

Two "Ways" to View the Place of Religion

Reader: Frattoroli, *Swimming Pool and Quest*

3.2 Multiple Meanings of "Spirituality"

A Guide for the Perplexed

(Class Notes)

Week 4 (Feb 2)

Quest and "The Hero's Adventure"

Introduction: Mythology as Guide to Spiritual Transformation

(Class Notes)

4.1 "The Hero's Adventure"

Ancient, New Story of Spiritual Transformation

Reader: Moyers, *The Hero's Adventure*

4.2 When the "Story" is Lost

In the Middle of the Road We Call Life

Reader: Shutt, *Monsters, Gods, and Heroes*, Dante and the Divine Comedy

Week 5 (Feb 9)

The Relation of Morality to Spirituality

Introduction: But, Does Religion Make Us "Good"?

(Class Notes)

5.1 The Heart of "Mature" Spirituality

The "Triangle of Ultimate Concerns" and Morality

Reader: Symington, *Emotion and Spirit*

5.2 The Moral Core of "Mature" Religion

The "Natural" Moral Foundation of Religious Spirituality

Reader: Armstrong, *Wish for a Better World*

Week 6 (Feb 16)
“Deep Architecture” of Spirituality

Introduction: Is Spirituality “Natural” to Human Beings?
(Class Notes)

6.1 “Beyond Belief”

The (Possible) Natural Origins of Religious Moral Codes

Reader: Graham & Haidt, *Beyond Beliefs*

6.2 “Spiritual Evolution”

Moral Emotions that Connect Us to God and Others

Reader: Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*, Ch. 1, Positive Emotions

9.

Transforming the Capacity to Love
Ancient, New Model of Transformational Change

Purifying Motives, Not Just Changing Behavior
Read: Symington

“Lost” Psychology of Moral Change
Three Processes of Transformational Change
Read: Class Handout

“Search for Glory”
Horney’s Alternative Model of Pride (Part 1)

Week 12 (Apr 1)
Can You Really “Practice” Love?

Introduction: Contemplative Mind Science and the Process of Healing

The Tragic “Search for Glory”

Horney’s Conception of Pride (Part 3)

Handout: Cooper, Ch. 6, pp. 139– remainder of chapter

Reading Reflection and Class Discussants Ja-Jo

Science Looks at Spirituality

Crafting Virtue the Mindful Way

Handout: *Science Looks at Spirituality*

Reading Reflection and Class Discussants K-Mar

Week 13 (Apr 8)

Easter Recess

Part 4

Embodied Love

Spiritual Transformation in the New Science of Virtue

Major Themes: The capacity to “care” as central *telos* of spiritual maturity; why spiritual transformation needs a virtue approach; which virtues and why; what “good” is a virtue; how virtues motivate us to be good (care).

Week 14 (Apr 15)

What is the Relationship Between Love and Virtue?

Introduction: The Problem with “The Golden Rule”

“Homo Caritatis”

The Nature and Meaning of Love

Handout: *Leffel, Brief Report #3*

Reading Responses and Class Discussants O-Ped

Who Cares?

A New Model of Virtuous Caring

Handout: *The Compassionate Instinct: The Science of Human Goodness*

Reading Responses and Class Discussants Pet-Sc

Distribution of Final Exam Questions

11.

4040 *Revised*

Week 15 (Apr 22)

What “Good” is a Virtue?

Introduction: Why Virtues Are More Important Than We Have Believed

How Virtue is a Brain Thing

The New “Neurodynamic” Model of Virtue

Handout: *Leffel, Brief Report #4*

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) Su-Y

Week 16 (Apr 29)

No Class Dr. Leffel at WPA

Finals Week (Wed, May 6)